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Iowa
The Clayton County Fair

ONE HUNDREDTH
ANNIVERSARY

Commemorating
One Hundred Years of Service
to the Agriculture and the People
of Clayton County

by Walter W. Jacobs

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The Clayton County fair, one hundredth anniversary. [Sponsored by the Clayton Co. Agricultural Society]

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I. Title.

Rec'd May 8-1978



Out of the Past

MELVIN BEIMFOHR, PRESIDENT

JOHN CORLETT, VICE-PRESIDENT

E. E. STICKFORD, SECRETARY

WALTER MEIER, TREASURER

The Clayton County Agricultural Society

SPONSORS OF THE

CLAYTON COUNTY FAIR

To The Public:

In presenting this souvenir of the Clayton County Fair in its Centennial Year, we do so with a two fold purpose. First, to put into a permanent form a concise history of the growth and experiences of an institution which has survived the changes occurring through four generations and to honor the early pioneers of Clayton County whose forethought and unselfishness made its organization possible.

To these men and women, whose influence is still felt because of their efforts of a century ago, this work is affectionately and respectfully dedicated.

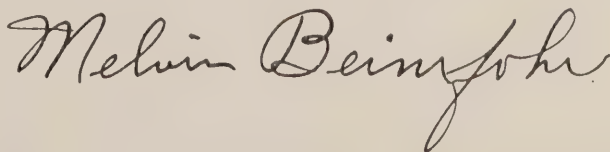
With regard to this historical souvenir itself: in the beginning we had not hoped to present quite the pretentious work which has developed. But as plans developed, it was felt that a truly representative booklet telling of the past century should be completed.

So we now, rather proudly, offer this recount of the life of the Clayton County Agricultural Society and of the institution which it has sponsored since its beginning.

As to the future, we feel that agriculture and the fields emanating from it will always be the basic industries of Clayton County. We predict that when the history of another hundred years is written, a record of continued progress will be indicated. Every change which has occurred during the past century has been one of improvement. Because of this, we feel that the Clayton County Fair, a pioneer among the fairs of Iowa, will continue to expand and develop with the progress of agriculture in Clayton County.

We trust we may merit your continued support.

Cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Melvin Beimfohr". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name "President".

President

The Presidents of the Clayton County Agricultural Society

Edwin Sherman	1861 - 1862
Oliver W. Crary	1863
J. E. Corlett	1864
James Parker	1865 - 1866
P. G. Baily	1867
J. S. King	1868
Wm. S. Scott	1869 - 1871
H. C. Hoyt	1872
James Jack	1873 - 1875
D. F. Bickel	1876
A. F. Nichols	1877 - 1878
Sanford Ballou	1879
Luther Nichols	1880 - 1881
James McGuire	1882 - 1884
Sanford Ballou	1885
William Oelke	1886
W. C. McNeil	1887
F. L. Williams	1888 - 1889
S. H. F. Schoulte	1890 - 1892
Thomas Fleming	1893 - 1894
J. E. Corlett	1895 - 1897
William H. Hanson	1898
S. H. F. Schoulte	1899 - 1901
Adam Erbe	1902 - 1903
Joseph Matt	1904 - 1913
Herb. C. Brownson	1914 - 1915
J. H. Buckman	1916 - 1923
Hale Corlett	1924
W. E. Kaiser	1925 - 1930
Louis Matt, Jr.	1931 - 1934
Gilbert N. Meyer	1935 - 1945
V. C. Marting	1946
Melvin Beimfohr	1947 - 1951
Alfred C. Pufahl	1952
Melvin Beimfohr	1953 - 1954

The Vice - Presidents of the Clayton County Agricultural Society

J. H. Glass	1867
C. F. Hall	1868 - 1870
H. C. Hoyt	1871
J. E. Corlett	1872
Luther Nichols	1873
G. B. Dickey	1874
W. W. Goodwin	1875
J. E. Branch	1876
W. W. Goodwin	1877
N. W. Williver	1878
Luther Nichols	1879
J. S. King	1880
James McGuire	1881
Aug. H. Oelke	1882 - 1884
Wm. H. Oelke	1885
C. W. Walker	1886
Fred Arnold	1887 - 1889
J. W. Kregel	1890 - 1892
J. E. Corlett	1893 - 1894
F. N. Adams	1895 - 1896
W. H. Hanson	1897
E. W. Kregel	1898
C. F. Meier	1899 - 1900
Adam Erbe	1901
Frank Possehl	1902
Wm. Buckman	1903
Henry Schlake	1904 - 1905
Henry Kuhlman	1906
C. F. Meier	1907
Fred Klinge	1908
Herb C. Brownson	1909 - 1913
W. E. Kaiser	1914 - 1924
E. W. Tuecke	1925 - 1929
W. C. Monlux	1930
Lloyd Brownson	1931 - 1944
D. R. Witter	1945 - 1949
Alfred C. Pufahl	1950 - 1951
Melvin Beimfohr	1952
John Corlett	1953 - 1954

The Secretaries of the Clayton County Agricultural Society

Norman Hamilton	1861 - 1864
J. E. Corlett	1865 - 1867
Charles Watkins	1868
Norman Hamilton	1869
E. P. Hall	1870 - 1872
J. W. Shannon	1873
John Everall	1874 - 1875
Geo. H. Otis	1876 - 1878
Alva C. Rogers	1879
John Everall	1880 - 1881
Norman Hamilton	1882 - 1884
O. A. Kenyon	1885 - 1887
J. D. Maurer	1888 - 1891
E. W. Kregel	1892 - 1894
J. G. Hempel	1895 - 1896
F. M. Adams	1897
John E. Corlett	1898
L. N. Kramer	1899
F. M. Adams	1900
F. J. Putz	1901
Henry Luehsen	1902 - 1914
W. L. Eichendorf	1915 - 1916
Alvin J. Kregel	1917 - 1929
Hale Corlett	1930
A. D. Roggman	1931 - 1934
F. L. Lau	1935 - 1944
L. T. Birdsell	1945 - 1946
Arthur Seeland	1947 - 1949
Walter W. Jacobs	1950 - 1951
E. E. Stickfort	1952 - 1954

The Treasurers of the Clayton County Agricultural Society

John H. Schoulte	1861 - 1866
Chas. Watkins	1867
Alvah C. Rogers	1868 - 1869
Geo. A. Troeger	1870
F. D. Hinkler	1871
J. H. Merrill	1872
Frank Larabee	1873 - 1874
Gregor McGregor	1875
John Everall	1876
S. H. F. Schoulte	1877 - 1878
James Uriell	1879 - 1881
D. F. Renshaw	1882
J. F. W. Kaiser	1883 - 1894
C. F. Meier	1895 - 1897
Jos. Lamm	1898
H. C. Howe	1899 - 1908
Alvin J. Kregel	1909 - 1916
L. W. Thompson	1917 - 1919
Henry Oelke, Jr.	1920 - 1922
K. W. Rash	1923 - 1927
A. J. Johnson	1928 - 1929
A. J. Larson	1930
Chas. Roggman	1931
Wm. Fuhrman	1932 - 1944
A. D. Roggman	1945
Arthur Harnack	1946 - 1950
Walter Meier	1951 - 1954

It has well been said that "once in a hundred years a community should celebrate". This should be equally true of any group which has survived a century of life and service to it's community. But to an organization which has fittingly celebrated each passing year over such a period of time, still remaining dedicated to the purposes and ideals of the founders, the one hundredth anniversary means more than mere celebration.

It is also a time for retrospection, and appreciation of the foresight of those pioneers who four generations ago saw fit to band together and work to create an institution which has lasted to this day.

It is obvious that any organization which is now able to commemorate its centennial must have had its origin very early in the history of the state, and its beginning among men of various walks of life and family background who left their native heaths to migrate to a new frontier because of the greater promise there. Men who in spite of the trials of a pioneer life, and the effort of wresting an existence in their new home, took the time to form an organization wherein they might labor together for a common purpose.

Such an institution is the Clayton County Fair, which almost since its inception has been under the sponsorship of the Clayton County Agricultural Society, whose records date from May 25, 1861. The Clayton County Fair, however began it's history under the sponsorship of another group which called itself the Clayton County Agricultural and Horticultural Society which had been rather informally organized eight years earlier. It may be said that this older group came into existence largely because of the efforts of one individual, Mr. Henry S. Granger, the editor of the newly established Clayton County Herald at Garnavillo. Garnavillo was the county seat of Clayton County at this time, and was becoming quite an enterprising settlement.

It was in July of 1853 that Mr. Granger, through the columns of his paper began his vigorous

campaign for the formation of an agricultural society. He had come to Garnavillo from Ohio in 1850, and realized what an organized agricultural group could do in this new territory. Each week's edition was filled with editorials and articles urging that a meeting be held to discuss the matter. He was successful in having this meeting called at Garnavillo on August 5, 1883, with quite a number of the early settlers present.

Elias H. Williams, who was the first Clayton County judge, presided and Mr. Granger acted as secretary. The committee chosen to draft a constitution and solicit memberships was composed of the following: Timothy Davis of Boardman Township, Chairman; Robert Smith, Sperry; Dennis Quigley, Volga; J. C. Tremaine, Cass; John Noble, Lodomillo; John W. Potts, Mallory; John Barnett, Buena Vista; J. W. Griffith, Millville; Eliphalet Price, Jefferson; F. A. Olds, Garnavillo; M. L. Fischer, Farmersburg; L. Bigelow, Mendon; P. P. Olmstead, Monona; and Joshua Jackson of Wagner — truly a representative group of early Clayton County pioneers.

This group reported back on September 10th when a constitution was adopted and officers elected. Samuel Murdock of Garnavillo was chosen President, with the following named as Vice-Presidents: P. M. Potter, Boardman; Jared Watkins, Farmersburg; Charles W. Richardson, Millville; John W. Potts, Mallory; John Collins, Mendon; Lyman Haskins, Wagner; F. A. Olds, Garnavillo; James Farris, Buena Vista; Eliphalet Price, Jefferson; Robert Smith, Sperry; Alexander McCulloch, Monona; E. K. Beckford, Volga; Jonathan Noble, Lodomillo; David Merritt, Cass. H. S. Granger was elected secretary and L. S. McCollister of Farmersburg, treasurer.

Article one of the constitution adopted at this meeting reads as follows: "The style of this Society shall be the Clayton County Agricultural and Horticultural Society. Its objects shall be to promote and improve the agricultural, mechanical, and household

arts of Clayton County, State of Iowa.”

With a name and purpose, the organization now made plans for the first Fair, which was held in Garnavillo on Oct. 3, 1854, just three weeks before the first Iowa State Fair. It must not have been all that the editor of the Garnavillo paper hoped that it would be, for he was rather short in his write up of the event. He did say that “the number of horses and other stock was much smaller than had been anticipated”, and that “the ladies department was more creditably filled than the men’s”. A total of \$103.00 was awarded in premiums.

This first Fair was followed by one held in Clayton Center in 1855, in Guttenberg in 1856, again in Clayton Center in 1857, and the next three years in National, which had formerly been known as Farmersburg. The village had been known as Farmersburg since it was first settled in 1848, but when the postoffice was established there in 1854, with Isaac Stoddard as postmaster, the name National was chosen. With the coming of the Iowa Eastern Railroad from Beulah to Elkader later, the name Farmersburg was given to the platted site of Windsor, four miles to the west. The site of Windsor was surveyed in 1856, and the post office was established there as Farmersburg in 1857. Much of the business of National left there after the coming of the railroad and National became known only as the site of the Fair.

This interchange of the names made it difficult to follow in early history because Farmersburg was the railroad shipping point for the National settlement, which only added to the confusion in trying to keep the names straight.

It seems that during these first years of the Fair’s existence, location for the year was decided by the most attractive offer from the neighboring settlements, for the Fair was conducted more or less as a local enterprise. But now it was sought to organize on a county-wide basis and select a permanent site for

the annual showing.

Those interested in the organization were not happy about this constant shifting of the Fair's location. As early as 1857, after only two Fairs had been held, some thought was given to the location of a permanent site. At a meeting of the Society held in Elkader on Feb. 21, 1857, with Michael Uriell presiding, it was resolved that the executive committee select a permanent location. Needless to say there was a contest immediately. Clayton, Elkader, Clayton Center and National entered the lists with various propositions. National was first decided upon but upon reconsideration of the matter, Clayton Center won. This created a deep resentment in National against Elkader, whom they held responsible.

These were the days of the second session of the County seat fights and almost each year saw new elections for its relocation. It is understandable that this general mixture of opinions held in the county seat battle would be reflected in all county wide organizations, for the same individuals were involved and tempers often flared.

But in the matter of location, the Society had made up its mind, and a tract of six acres of land was purchased just north of the present church in Clayton Center for the holding of the Fair. There is no record of any buildings ever being placed on the property, but the street directly west of the church is designated as "Fair Street" on the plat of Clayton Center which was platted in 1857. However only the Fair of 1857 was held on this site, after which it was held at National during the existence of its first sponsoring group.

It seemed then that National was, unofficially at least, the choice of location, so now it was sought to reorganize the Society and officially designate National as the permanent site of the Fair.

This is where the present Clayton County Agricultural Society came into being. Most of those who had been previously interested in the Fair gave their

support to the reorganization and met on May 25, 1861, to draw up the constitution and by-laws and to arrange for incorporation.

The Constitution of this new organization begins with the following resolution: "WHEREAS, It is deemed that an agricultural society should be organized in Clayton County, in such a manner as to become a body corporate under the general laws of the State of Iowa. Relating to the erection of corporations, therefore it is RESOLVED, this 25th day of May 1861 that Norman Hamilton, Samuel Murdock, Mark. B. Sherman, Alonzo Brown and John Dice, with their present and future associates and successors, are hereby constituted a body corporate to continue forty years, under the following constitution: Article one, This association shall be styled the Clayton County Agricultural Society. Its object shall be to advance the interests of agriculture and mechanical industry, to improve the stock and mind".

At this meeting Edwin Sherman was elected president; Norman Hamilton, secretary, and John H. Schoulte, treasurer. The board of directors chosen were Joseph Eibock, George Killam, Alonzo Brown, John Dice, M. B. Sherman, George W. Beach, Samuel Murdock, O. W. Crary and P. M. Potter. Apparently not much attention was paid to the office of vice-president, for it is not until 1867 that we find this office filled. Among others who were identified with the early Fairs and gave freely of their time were J. E. Corlett, Fred Diers, Egbert Branch, Wm. Oelke, T. D. White, C. F. Hall, O. A. Kenyon and Michael Uriell.

The first Fair held under the sponsorship of the new group was held at Garnavillo in October 1861. From the writings of the Sherman Sisters, both of whom attended this exhibition, mention is made that the weather was cold and rainy, and that it was necessary to heat the room in which the exhibits were displayed. Corn was burned for fuel, and a discussion as to the value and merit of ear corn as a fuel was a part of the

one afternoon program. At this Fair there were but 24 exhibitors, and of these 18 won premiums. Because of the inclement weather the attendance was much smaller than anticipated and there was not enough income to pay all premiums in full. However, nearly all winners returned a part of their premium money, so the total amount expended was only \$33.10.

At the second annual meeting held on May 21, 1862, it was finally decided to locate the site of the Fair permanently at National, and the Board of Directors appropriated \$80.00 for an exhibition building.

National was, at this time, quite a settlement, with two churches, the Congregationalist which was located just to the south of the old cemetery, and the Methodist almost directly across from it on the opposite side of the highway. It is interesting to observe that there were two churches in a village as small as this, but the pioneer brought his religion with him, for the Congregational Church was organized in 1853, services having been held at early as 1844. The church was, however, not built until 1879 at a cost of \$2,672.26.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1847 and until their church was built in 1855 they held their service in a log cabin in the Pioneer District. There must have been some division of thought on the part of this group later, for the Second Methodist Church was organized in 1866, and held services in the schoolhouse until their church was completed in 1870.

This schoolhouse was the first building built on the site of the village by Alva Hazen in 1848 and was built of logs. It was soon after converted to a school house and used for several years until the schoolhouse, which is now the Amvet headquarters was built on the Farmersburg Road. This Second Methodist church was built some distance south of the other, and set back slightly further from the present road. This building is still standing on the Cyril Matt farm. National also had a hotel, blacksmith shop, and the usual variety of stores. There were, in fact, buildings on either side of

the road from the corner as far north as the cemetery and running east to the Fairgrounds for a distance.

In fact, when the Village of National was platted, most of the land within the platted area was located to the east of the present highway No. 52, and north of the road now leading to the Fairgrounds. This east and west road was originally known as Centre Street, just as the present highway was then Main Street. There was another short street, known as North Street, which ran from the old Morgan Hotel directly east to the Fairgrounds. This street was closed in 1917.

During the year 1861 a small acreage of land lying west of the Methodist Church was bought and used as the Fairgrounds for the next four years. From early writings we glean that a building had been erected before the 1862 Fair to house the exhibits. This was merely posts set in the ground with a roof over them, but without sides. There were a series of benches built on posts around the building for the displays, while the livestock on exhibition was tied to a conveniently located fence.

The selection of the site of the Fair was not done without some thought, which is evident from the fact that the location is almost equidistant from Elkader, Monona, McGregor and Guttenberg, which were the larger settlements in the county. It is understandable that location meant considerable in the time when all transportation was horsedrawn.

The records show that at this Fair a plowing match was held which aroused considerable interest, so much so in fact that for years this was an annual feature. The competition was, of course, with two horse teams and walking plows and there was never any shortage of entries. (It is interesting to note that even today, after a hundred years, plowing matches still draw tremendous crowds, though the walking plow is no longer in evidence. It is obvious that the ability to do a good job of plowing and plow a straight furrow is still recognized as the mark of a good farmer.

It is also stated that at this Fair a local girl, a Miss McWilliams gave a riding exhibition. Riding like a circus performer, sometimes sitting, sometimes standing, as she galloped her mount over the unfenced prairies. This performance was doubtless instrumental in forming the first unofficial women's riding club in Clayton County and it developed considerable interest in the lighter breeds of horses, because for many years there were riding and driving contests for women as a part of the Fair program.

Before the Fair of 1864 a frame building had been erected, sixteen by fifty feet in size, to house the ever increasing number of exhibits. This building had shelves built along all walls and for a time seemed quite satisfactory. However, the needs of the Society again outgrew these quarters and in 1866 the site of the Fair was changed to its present location. Here ten acres of land had been bought for \$900.00, and the two story frame structure, known variously as "The Fair House", "Exposition Hall", and later as "Floral Hall" was erected.

The early plat books clearly show the location of the building, which was a perfect octagon fifty feet in diameter, in the exact center of the ten acre tract. This building served the needs of the Society for seventy-five years, and there must be many who remember the old landmark well. There are some of us who feel that it was unfortunate that it has been removed to make way for things more modern. While its location might not have been ideal in the present arrangement, it might have been moved to another site and put to good use today.

That the Society was definite in its desire to have the permanent headquarters at National is evidenced by an entry in the records under date of July 26, 1867. "The Old Fairgrounds at Clayton Centre, consisting of six acres was sold to Frederick Hartman for the sum of \$150.00, by special warranty deed".

After the locating of the Fair on the site it has

occupied these past ninety years, each year saw further improvements added. Among the first was the drilling of a deep well to insure an adequate supply of water. This particular item, that of providing plenty of water, was a large headache to the Society for many years. Not that the supply was not ample, but the difficulty and time consumed in pumping the water created quite a problem.

The water supply was an even greater problem in the early days than it is today, for with everyone coming to the Fair with horses, these would have to be watered during the stay at the Fair. This, coupled with the water necessary for the livestock on exhibition and that used by those in attendance, often made a long wait. In fact, it was not uncommon to have to wait an hour or more to obtain water. For the first forty-five years the pump was operated by two horses on a treadmill. This was not a very efficient way, but it was the only method available other than pumping by hand.

One can imagine that a team of thirsty plow horses could drink the output about as fast as it could be pumped. Finally several large tanks were obtained that water might be pumped at night in advance, which seemed to ease this situation. As soon as the gasoline motor was perfected, this was used, and later when electricity was available on the grounds, an electric motor was installed. There may not be too many folks who can recall the horses on the treadmill, but there are surely many who can associate the constant chugging of the gasoline engine with the Clayton County Fair. Happily the water at the Fairgrounds is of the finest, and periodic checks with the laboratory of the State Board of Health have never revealed any objectionable qualities.

At this time the Society was informed that the County Supervisors were permitted to appropriate up to \$1,000.00 to the Society. This was followed up, and it was agreed by the Supervisors that the \$1,000.00 would be available when the Society had ten acres of

ground free from debt. At this time it was \$1,300.00 in debt, due mostly to the construction of the "Fair-house", but the report of the Secretary in 1869 seemed to justify this situation when he said, "The Society has beautiful grounds, enclosed by a tight fence costing \$1,000.00, a fine two story fairbuilding upon which has been expended more than \$2,000.00. Also pens and stalls for stock." In spite of the fact that the Fair attendance was not as good as the previous year due to weather conditions, more than \$600.00 of the indebtedness was paid off.

These early years of the Fair were discouraging ones for agriculture in Clayton County as well as elsewhere. The period of low prices of farm products which began in 1858 and continued through the war years made a very rigid economy for the farmer, and a trying time for the Fair organization. Then too, many of those who were the leaders were called to take part in the Civil War and served during the entire struggle.

The Society was obliged to go into debt and it was not until almost a decade after the end of the war that it became financially solvent. The turn came in the years 1873 to 1875, under the leadership of James Jack when a balance after operating expenses was shown.

But the Fair itself kept on growing, in fact it could have grown even faster if the Society had been financially able to provide more stall and pen room for livestock exhibits, for the shortage of space frequently prevented those who would have brought stock from doing so. The women's Departments were well taken care of with the erection of the large building used for this purpose.

In a masterful report on conditions submitted with his report, Geo. H. Otis, who was secretary at the time, urged that these conditions be corrected so that there be representative entries in all classes, for said he "We have in Clayton County, in round numbers, a total

of 20,000 head of cattle, 11,000 head of horses, 600 mules, 6,000 head of sheep and 23,000 swine, all together valued at \$600,000.00, which should give fine representation if proper facilities were provided and adequate premiums paid."

It may seem difficult to believe that during the first fifteen years of its life, the Fair was held in the unseasonable month of October. But this was the day when threshing machines were few, and were run by horse power. So the farmer stacked his grain, and awaited his turn to thresh it, which oftentimes did not come until early October. He might be early one year and late the next, for the old time threshing "rings" would reverse their order from year to year, so that the same individual was not always the last one finished. Because of this delay in completing the threshing, no farmer would have any grain to exhibit until all this work had been done.

Whatever else he may have been, the pioneer must have been an individual who wanted a drink when he wanted it. As early as 1867 we find that "Obrien and Duff of McGregor were granted concession rights to sell refreshments upon the Fairgrounds during the seventh exhibition for the sum of \$150.00 subject to the rules of Chapter 109 of the Laws of Iowa". Upon checking the statute obtaining at that time we find that the Revised Code of 1860, which was amended by the Tenth General Assembly in 1864, Chapter 109, Sec. 2, on page 140 says "No person shall be permitted to sell intoxicating liquors of any kind or be engaged in any gambling or horseracing either inside the enclosure where any County or District Agricultural Society Fair is being held, or within one hundred, sixty rods thereof during the time of holding such Fair."

Of course we may be all wrong in our idea of what the "refreshments" may have consisted, but it does seem hardly reasonable that any concessionaire would pay \$50.00 per day for the privilege of dispensing lemonade. In any event it must have taken some

fine engineering to get this past the Board, for some of the members were strict prohibitionists. In 1869, the dry's were in control and, by resolution, the sale of liquor was discontinued on the grounds. But this issue cropped up each year for in 1870 it was again on sale, but in 1872 it was not. It was not until 1885, when the state became dry by statute that the mention of liquor disappears from the minutes of the Society. No doubt it was still available then. in one way or another, for Clayton County along with other "river" counties in Iowa, paid scant attention to the state's liquor laws. Happily for the thirsty, this statewide drought was not of too long duration, even though it was a red hot issue in its time.

In spite of the fact that Article 12 of the Constitution provided that "no horseracing or any device foreign to the objects of the Society shall be encouraged by the Society or allowed on it's Fairgrounds" the Board was compelled to bow to public sentiment, and allow horseracing, even though this too was illegal under the same statute which prohibited the sale of liquor. The offending section of the Constitution was removed, and a circular tract one-third of a mile in length was built, despite the fact that there was considerable dissension among the directors as to whether this was the thing to do. After harness racing once started there was no indication that it would again be a part of the following year's program. Because of the division of thought among the directors on this subject, some years there was racing and others there was not, depending on which faction controlled the Board.

This annual contest for supremacy was not an ideal situation and one group even went so far as to suggest the removal of the Fairgrounds to another location. In fact even petitioned the Board to do so. The Board, however, refused to act on the measure and in time the differences were forgotten.

Other efforts to move the location of the Fair

were offered, sponsored by Monona and Elkader, but nothing came of these propositions.

The idea of having a Fair in the community seemed to be a popular one in several towns in Clayton County. In fact a second Fair was established at Strawberry Point in 1881. This fair enjoyed early success, but was disbanded after operating almost forty years.

Elkader, too, entered the fair picture when a movement was inaugurated to establish a fair at the county seat town in 1895. It was not until 1898, however, that this group became organized and held it's first fair in 1899. This venture, too, was successful and is still in operation, but, being chiefly of a local nature, did not seriously affect the fortunes of the Clayton County Fair.

That the Clayton County Fair was becoming more and more a part of the community life of the county is evidenced by the fact that the Society felt they needed more room for the operation of the Fair. At the annual meeting held on Nov. 2, 1890, President S. H. F. Schoulte was empowered to deal for the ten acres of land immediately adjoining the Fairgrounds to the south. Most of this land lay within the platted area of the Village of National and consisted of six outlots of Block 3 of the village. To illustrate how this land was divided, When President Schoulte reported back to the Board of Directors at the annual meeting of 1892, he advised that he had secured possession of the land, having secured Lot 1 of Block 3 from J. E. Corlett for \$250.00, another parcel from Roland Dice for \$185.00, another from Mary Drips for \$70.00, one from Ira Dice for \$105.00 and the balance from Herman and Joseph Behms for \$71.50. An interesting note is the fact that almost all of the amount needed for the purchase of these properties was raised by subscription among the members of the Society and only \$71.50 had to be taken from the treasury.

One of the first things undertaken by the Society

the following Spring was the lengthening of the race track from one-third to a standard half mile track, and to become affiliated with the American Trotting Association, in which organization they maintained membership as long as racing was a part of the program. The secretary was authorized to arrange for the building of an amphitheatre if it could be built "without expense to the Society" which may have been the reason why it was not done that year. The following year, however, the amphitheatre 96 feet long was built on the east side of the "home stretch" facing toward the west, with the judge's stand built directly across the track to the west. The grandstand was quite a considerable improvement for watching the races, over standing out in the open at track level, but the more popular place was the space beneath the stand which had been outfitted to dispense beer and wine.

Another building, the "Old Horse Barn", was built this year to house the racing stock during their stay on the grounds. This building was converted a few years ago into additional stall space for 4-H calf club entries, with a dormitory above for these young exhibitors. This building was removed in 1953.

This was the last building program on the Fairgrounds for a good many years. Improvements for the next twenty-five years consisted mostly of keeping the sheds in good enough repair to house the stock on exhibition. In the years when the entries of livestock were more numerous it became necessary to rent large tents to take care of the overflow, for the Fair Board felt this was a better policy than to erect other buildings.

During these years the program of the Fair consisted mostly of horse racing, with a parade of the horses between the races. Usually some fairly prominent speaker was secured to address the gathering, and a ball game or two filled the rest of the day. Band concerts were invariably a must for a complete program.

This was the day of the horse and wagon, but as the economic picture changed, the day came when

the wagon no longer came to the Fair, except to haul stock and produce for exhibition. It was superceded by the top buggy with its single horse and the canopy top, and the surrey for a team of horses. No doubt the Fairgoer at the turn of the century felt that he had reached the peak of entertainment.

A few good horse races, winning a few dollars perhaps, a stirring and inspiring talk by someone whom he had not known of before, and who had today actually shaken his hand; a few drinks under the grandstand, and he was ready to begin thinking about next year's Fair.

But times were changing unbeknown to those who participated, and the day when the first horseless carriage appeared on the Fairgrounds the people knew the change had come. This vehicle stampeded most of the staid and steady farm horses tied to hitching posts and buggy wheels, and was driven by white haired Judge J. O. Crosby of Garnavillo. The Judge was more than seventy years old at the time, but he stopped the show when he drove the vehicle through the gate and on the race track. Almost none of the several thousand people present had ever seen one of the new machines, and the spectacle of the venerable judge sitting there with his hand on the steering lever, and ringing the alarm bell constantly, going around the tract at an unimaginable speed, seemed to spell certain disaster. (It is said that this automobile, an Oldsmobile, was the first car to make its appearance in Clayton County.)

With the advent of the automobile it seems reasonable to expect that there would be such exhibits at the Fair during the following years. This was indeed the case. More large tents were needed to house the display and considerable time was spent listening to the salesmen telling of the merits of their own particular machines. Very few of these early makes of cars exhibited on the grounds are on the market today. The Reo, Overland, Chalmers, Chandler and Brush have gone their way, although the Oldsmobile, Cadillac,

Buick and Ford are still being manufactured. These early automobile displays did a lot to brighten up the Fairgrounds and made for much activity and interest during the Fair.

With the coming of easier transportation, many of the county fairs lost sight of the reason for their coming into existence. Entertainment became more and more the predominant feature of some fairs. The agricultural and homemaking crafts were to a large extent put aside, and the thrill show and carnival type of entertainment comprised most of the fair program in some sections.

Happily the Board of Directors of the Clayton County Fair never lost sight of this one purpose, "to encourage and advance the industrial and productive interests of the county". As manual training and homemaking were introduced into the curriculum of the high schools of the county, classes were opened in the exhibits of the Fair to encourage participation in these fields.

But conditions were changing faster than most people imagined. With the automobile there came agitation for better roads and the time came when it was but a matter of minutes to get to the Fair, rather than the hours it had taken with a team of horses. It was obvious that if one wanted to spend an hour or two on the road, one could drive to other centers to see what there was to see, and the attractions near home seemed to pale in contrast. In the horse and buggy days, the public was satisfied with what they found at the Fair, but now a few harness races and a spellbinding orator were not what the younger set wanted.

There was more freedom, more running around so to speak, and the advancing of farm prices in the period prior to, and during, the First World War (with the price of hogs going to 24 cents) made money plentiful. Most of the older farmers had accompanied a load of hogs to Chicago and had taken the opportunity to see the burlesque and musical shows there, so they

knew there was another form of entertainment other than what they had been used to seeing at the county fair.

So the time came in 1919 when the judges stand was removed and the grandstand moved to a new location. A stage was built, and the musical and novelty type of entertainment prevailed. Other things, too, were tried to satisfy the public in their changing taste for entertainment. Balloon ascensions, motorcycle races, aeroplane rides — at a dollar a minute — with a tailspin and a loop free with the ten minute ride . . . anything at all to catch the public interest.

The passing of the Eighteenth Amendment saw the appearance of hooch and the bootleggers on the fairgrounds, and a much rougher gang of roustabouts following the carnivals. Consequently, more police were necessary to keep law and order. But as usual conditions leveled off, the undesirable elements were eliminated and the Fair continued on its way.

It may be the coincidence which occurred at this period that has done more to place the Clayton County Fair in the strong position it is in today, than any other which occurred during its long life. The establishment of the Farm Bureau in Clayton County and the embarking of the Society on its greatest building occurred about the same time. The Clayton County Farm Bureau was organized in the winter of 1917-18, with 200 members, the minimum number required by law. The first County Agent, who was Mark F. McNown, was employed from March 1, 1918, until March 1, 1920. He was succeeded by A. Roy Combs, who remained in the office for eighteen years, and it was under his leadership that the 4-H program was brought into the county. The first such project was the Short-horn heifer club, which was started in 1920. The Dairy Club and Pure Bred Gilt Clubs were organized the following year and classes were made available at the Fair to accommodate these entries. The 4-H Club movement spread rapidly to every township in the

county and its Achievement Show, held each year in connection with the Clayton County Fair, has become its dominant feature.

With all this additional interest being shown by the young farm folks of the county, the Society made plans in 1920 to erect a concrete cattle barn one hundred sixty feet long to take care of the growing entries in this division. But this was only the beginning. Just as the dairy and beef calf clubs needed more room, so did the pig clubs need more pen space, and in 1921, a hog house one hundred, fifty feet long was built. This was followed in 1922 with another cattle barn eighty feet long, and with still another such eighty foot barn in 1923. Truly an ambitious building project and one which placed the Society among the best, in the matter of such facilities, with almost one thousand lineal feet of stall space.

It was well that this building program was carried on when it was, for the time soon came when the Achievement Show of the 4-H Clubs filled all of the available stall space and there was no longer room for any open classes. It is the opinion that this was, in a way, a fortunate circumstance, for it placed the annual exhibition back where it was in the beginning — just that of friendly competition among a group who had the most to gain from the experience.

In 1923 came a new feature, the first night Fair, which at once became popular. There was as yet no electricity on the grounds but this year there were four 32 volt electric light plants on the site to furnish power.

This same sort of plan was used in 1924, when additional buildings were wired and another successful night Fair was held. In 1924 also occurred the building of the second amphitheatre, a hundred feet long at a cost of \$6,409.57. With this additional seating space for watching program events, the Fair Board had a fine barometer as to just how successful the Fair had been. It is obvious that when the stands were filled during each day's showings, that it was a "good fair".

This amphitheatre was provided with a fine lower floor, suitable for dancing, and was used for this purpose, not only during the Fair each fall, but also during the summer for several years. Roller skating was also held there on those times of the month which did not conflict with the dancing. The pavilion was known far and wide as the "Everglide" and, until the coming of the lean years in 1929, did enjoy considerable patronage.

These were good years for the Fair, with all these additional buildings and the grounds spruced up. Even the weatherman relinquished his grudge against the Fair for a time or two, so the attendance was all that could be expected. If all who came did not exhibit, they at least came to attend the "annual homecoming", to have a few days of quiet relaxation among congenial friends for the renewal of friendships.

There were several other features being instituted in connection with the work of the Farm Bureau, through the 4-H Clubs. One of these was the home-making department for the girls, in 1924, whose program varied from year to year. One year it might be baking, another, the making of clothing, and another, home decoration. The program grew to include demonstrations by teams of the projects of the year, the winners representing the county in an annual competition at Des Moines.

Another feature of the Boys and Girls 4-H Club work was the development of the livestock judging contests. This was divided into two classes, beef and dairy. This particular phase of club work had particular appeal for Mr. Combs, the county agent, and one which was to bring great distinction to himself and the Clayton County Fair very shortly.

The year 1925 is an easy one to recall for this was the year that the "high line" was extended to the Fairgrounds. The directors signed an agreement with the Peoples Electric Service Co., of Elkader, to extend their service for \$325.00, and this should have been the solution to two of the big problems of the Fair, that of

adequate light and power for pumping water. But the line was too light for the load, which included four farms and the lighting in National in addition to that of the Fairgrounds, and it often became necessary to turn off most of the lights in National so the Fair could stay in business at night. This condition still made it difficult to get representative amusement companies to come to the grounds, for the larger companies did not care to play except in the larger places, while the smaller ones had no auxiliary power equipment. This condition of a shortage of power was evident for twenty-five years, when larger transformers and heavier wire finally brought the line up to date.

The Fair of 1926 dawned much like the fairs for seventy-five years had done and closed much as all previous fairs, but a situation developed which before a year had passed, had given the Clayton County Fair considerable favorable publicity. This was the development of the Junior Dairy Livestock Judging Team, three young farm folks, under the capable leadership of Roy Combs, who set the world afire with their ability. They were the Championship team at the Clayton County Fair and, by virtue of that distinction, were eligible to compete in the National Dairy Congress at Waterloo later in the year. What happened there and following is now history and I am going to let my friend, Charles A Benson of Elkader, who was State Senator at the time, tell you the story just as he told it in the 1927 Premium List of the Fair. This was one of the finest articles written of this Championship Judging Team, and Charley has kindly consented to the use of the material in this history.

* * * *

CLAYTON HAS CONTRIBUTED

MUCH TO IOWA'S GREATNESS

Clayton County, Iowa, rolling and rough though it be, has contributed freely and richly to the greatness of Iowa. In brains and brawn of its men, in wealth of natural resources, it is equalled by few and excelled

by none. It has been a powerful factor in shaping the destiny of this state, and in placing it in the front rank among the states of the nation in the forward movement of civilization. We, its citizens, may well be proud of it.

Of all the achievements for which Clayton County is entitled to recognition, none is more outstanding or more illustrious than the victory recently won by the Junior Dairy Livestock Judging Team., in competition with the best and finest judging teams that the other states could develop, won premier honors at the National Dairy Show at Detroit, Michigan, thereby gaining the title of "National Champion Junior Dairy Livestock Team of the United States." Previously thereto, at the Dairy Cattle Congress at Waterloo, Iowa, with thirty-eight teams competing, they had won the state championship which gave them the right to represent Iowa at the National Dairy Show.

Right well did they represent Iowa at that show. They not only won first honors as a team with twenty other teams, competing, but two members placed first and second, respectively, the third member placing sixteenth. Maryland, a team that has three times won the National Championship, was one hundred and fifty-two points behind the Iowa team, winning second place. The total score of the Iowa team was 3789 points.

In addition to winning first place, a great honor in itself, the youthful members of the team established several records that may stand for some time. As a team they received the highest score ever won by a judging team in a contest at the National Dairy Show. Miss Gertrude Kaiser, a Clayton County farm girl of sixteen years, paved the way for her sex when she won first as an individual, the first girl to ever win that honor at that show. As evidence that her feat was no accident, the score that she hung up, 1305, broke all previous records for individual high markings. And further, she also was first as an individual at the Cattle Congress, outclassing all other contestants. At Detroit,

Lloyd Kaiser ranked next to Gertrude with a score of 1289 points, while Kenneth Walter, the third member of the team, received a score of 1195 points, indicating the remarkably uniform and consistent work of these young people.

As National Champions, they were entitled to represent the United States at an International Judging Contest at the Royal Livestock Show, London, England. The Forty-second General Assembly of Iowa appropriated the sum of Five Thousand Dollars to defray the expenses of the members of the team, their coach, and a dairy expert. The party, including Mrs. J. H. Kaiser, Gertrude's mother, left McGregor, Iowa, at one o'clock a. m. Saturday, May 28, 1927, on their long journey. Their first visit was at Washington, D. C. where they had an appointment to meet the President of the United States, and others of national prominence. From there they went to New York where they spent two days in sight seeing. On Saturday, June 4, 1927, they boarded the ship "The Majestic," one of the mightiest vessels afloat, for Europe.

They visited the leading dairy countries across the seas, both to study agricultural conditions there and to obtain training and instruction in judging dairy cattle in those countries. Their type of cattle differs somewhat from ours, and it was necessary that they receive actual practice work in Judging in preparation for the international contest. They visited England, France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Germany and the Isle of Jersey, where they had the opportunity to see and study the foremost farms and herds of the country.

The International Judging Contest was held on July 14, 1927 in London. The Clayton County Team were placed second in the contest with Great Britain only twelve points ahead. In the contest were teams from all the leading agricultural nations competing for the World's Championship.

In representing the United States in this International Contest, the Clayton County Team have done

well. To hold second place in a world's contest shows great ability on the part of the girl and boys. Special credit is due Miss Kaiser, as the only girl in the Competition. To be champions of the United States and Second in the World is an honor of which they may feel proud, and one in which all Clayton County takes part. They have brought honor to the County, the State, and the United States.

* * * *

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Thank you, Charley Benson.

What the public may not know is that this trip to England would not have been possible without the efforts of Senator Benson. We know that he did introduce the bill in the Senate when the 42nd General Assembly convened, authorizing the appropriation of \$5,000.00 for the expenses of the trip. The bill passed the Senate easily, but ran into unexpected trouble in the House, but did pass when a vote was taken. However the Speaker of the House ruled that the bill was for private benefit and would require a two-thirds majority to make it effective. This it did not have and, as the time for reconsideration had passed, Senator Benson took it upon himself to discuss the matter with the Attorney General, arguing that the bill could not possibly be for private interest, but was a step in stimulating interest in the development and production of better livestock. The Attorney General held that the Speaker of the House had erred and that a simple majority was all that the bill required to pass that body. So the team which obtained its start and first experience in the judging field at the Clayton County Fair, had their trip to England and acquitted themselves nobly as mentioned earlier.

This particular succession of shows for winners is no longer in effect. Winning judging teams from the counties now are eligible to attend the Dairy Cattle Congress at Waterloo and these winners may participate in the National Dairy Show, whose winners complete the annual cycle at the annual International Live-

stock Exposition which is held each year in early December at Chicago, Illinois.

There had been no new building on the Fairgrounds for several years, but additional large tents were necessary to house many of the displays which were coming to the Fair. Most of these displays were home furnishings and automobiles and, in 1927, the Board decided to complete the building program which had been outlined some years before. The large Industrial Building 50 x 200 feet in size was built, which provided more than 30 booths for the display of exhibits. The income from this building alone was quite an item and was a good business investment.

One would have suspected that the coming of the period of low prices would cast its shadow before it arrived in the field of entertainment, but this was not the case. Some of the best years the fair enjoyed were the years of 1929 and 1930. In each of these years the income of the Fair exceeded \$8,000.00, which was not a true barometer of what was happening to farm prices. Three cent hogs and eighteen cent butterfat finally did curtail the activities of the Fair and, while an annual exhibition was always scheduled and never has one been missed, it was almost twenty years before conditions were again as they should have been.

During this period there were some who felt that one Fair in Clayton County was enough and the Board of Directors received overtures to combine with the Elkader Fair. A contract had been drawn up and presented to the Board to this effect and President W. E. Kaiser in October of 1930 appointed a committee to carry out any preliminary measures which might be necessary and report back at the annual meeting to be held in November. But when the matter was presented at the annual meeting it was voted down 22 to 7, so nothing more was said about the matter.

During this depressing period the Board of Directors seemed to try every means to promote interest in each Fair, but conditions were such that nothing

could be done. Exhibits were smaller, less livestock was on display and the income of the Fair was seriously curtailed. Admission prices were reduced and the price of the advertising in the annual premium list was cut down in an attempt to keep going one more year.

Where formerly the new Industrial Building had been filled to capacity with exhibits, there now appeared only a few, and all the exhibits of the various departments could easily be housed in this one building.

In 1941 the old octagon shaped "Fair House" was taken down and the lumber taken elsewhere. A part of the new building was changed to accommodate the displays of the culinary, textile, fruit and floral divisions, and there was still a lot of empty space. I doubt if there was anyone who believed that a really successful fair might again be held. The attendance was small and some years it was possible to pay only half of the premiums earned. But the time came when there was a definite improvement in the Fair situation, the reason for which may be hard to explain. Perhaps it was due to the fact that times were getting better, the prices of farm produce were advancing, which was indeed true with the advent of World War II. Or perhaps it was because there was another generation growing up, who like their forebears, believed in the principles on which the institution was founded. In any event there was a decided renewal of interest which has continued to this day.

It was pleasant to see the light in the eyes of the "old timers" when they were again able to see both amphitheatres filled; something they had never again expected to see in their time. The Fair House, which for so many years was partially empty, began to fill with exhibits and the barns were full of the calves and pigs of the 4-H Achievement Show. Once again we found a point where no more stall space could be made. We were right back at the point we were years ago and canvas tents were rented to take care of the overflow.

To take care of this situation immediately after

the 1953 Fair another concrete block barn was built, one hundred and fifty feet long, which should be ample for present needs. This is situated on the site of the "Old Horse Barn" built in the nineties. This new building is provided with an upper floor which will accommodate the club members who remain on the grounds during the Fair with their stock. The removal of this "Old Horse Barn" leaves only one building from the old days of the Fair — the old amphitheatre — and gives the grounds an entirely "new look".

It would be impossible to say, or even venture a guess, that this is the end of the building program of the Clayton County Fair. Having its origin a century ago only as an idea in the minds of farsighted men, and today having such buildings and grounds that it will compare favorably with the best in Iowa, it seems reasonable to believe that the Fair has not yet reached the zenith of its existence. For as long as there are good farmers, they will be proud to exhibit their handiwork. And there will be good farmers for a good many years to come, if the interest taken by the farm boys and girls of Clayton County is any indication of the future. The 4-H movement has been a decisive factor in the successful fair operation. Not only has this reflected credit on the Fair, but has brought credit to those who have participated in the organization. Livestock which has been shown in Clayton County has gone on to give a good account of itself in shows which have followed the Clayton County Fair, just as the exhibits of the girls and their demonstration teams have competed with the best in Iowa and have not returned home unrewarded.

One might assume that the character of the agricultural exhibits may not have changed much during the past one hundred years. It is true that the squashes and potatoes, the cabbage and turnips have changed very little, but it has been quite some time since a plate of Red Beitigheimer apples has competed for premiums. Nor has the culinary department exhibited any bread or rolls made from home milled

wheat, or wheat ground at the local mills. There has been no maple sugar for years, and at one time there was quite a class in this item. In the beginning there were no canned fruits or vegetables, for the art of home canning had not been perfected. Any fruit exhibited was of the "dried" variety; but have you seen any dried "pear" tomatoes among the exhibits during the past few years?

There were preserved fruit of course in the form of marmalades, preserves and jellies, and we still find a class of "chokecherry" jelly in the present premium list. But there have been no homespun yarn, nor socks or mittens knitted from this product. Nor have we observed any home made boots or shoes, or any other articles made from home tanned leather. All these were a part of the premium lists of the early fairs.

In the early days, too, there was real rivalry in dairy products, but there has been no premium awarded for homemade "dairy" butter in a good long time. To have received a blue ribbon or diploma on either butter or cheese was the mark of a good housewife, and a fine recommendation as to her abilities.

Yes, a hundred years has brought changes to the exhibits of the Clayton County Fair, just as it has brought changes to every phase of agriculture from oxen to the modern tractor, from the cradle and scythe to the combine and hay chopper, from the haystack to the silo. We have come from the saddle horse to the automobile, and I might say back again, for there must be as many saddle horses in Clayton County as there were years ago. But the narrow wagon trail is now a paved highway, and farm boys no longer always marry the girl from the adjoining farm as they did a few generations ago. There have been more changes than the pioneer would possibly have imagined and he would not believe what he saw, if he could return today.

All these changes have occurred within the lifetime of the Clayton County Fair. This institution began as a part of the farm life of Clayton County and is

still a very definite part of it. It has seen good times and bad times, for changing economic conditions were felt by the organization, just as they were by individuals. But through unselfish cooperation the storms were weathered and now the Fair stands on the threshold of its second century.

In running through the lists of those who have actively taken part in the affairs of the Fair, one finds that son succeeded father on the Board of Directors, and today the third and fourth generation of some of the families are serving willingly to try to make ensuing fairs even better.

For in the main, it is not the exhibits, premiums or the attractions that have made possible the successful operation of the fairs of the past one hundred years. It has been the generous spirit back of the willing hands that devised and developed the annual fair. Despite the fact that there have been a hundred Clayton County Fairs, each fair is an undertaking unto itself, and many days and weeks of labor are cheerfully donated to make this community enterprise possible. The labor of building fences and buildings and planting trees, putting in water works, sweeping, cleaning and decorating the buildings; all were necessary and have been accomplished. It would be difficult to say who have been the greatest benefactors.

Many men and women have contributed freely of their time and effort, just as many more must generously bear the burdens in the years that lie ahead.

Clearly, though, with the fine spirit of cooperation which has been so well displayed during the past century, if the saying that "the first hundred years are the hardest", is true, the Clayton County Fair has nothing to worry about.

Acknowledgements

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Walter W. Jacobs



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